

“Wish I’d Known” Survey
La Trobe University, Australia

PACKING AND TRAVELING

Specifically, what kind of LINENS did you need to bring?

- I brought one flat sheet and my sleeping bag. I used my sleeping bag as a comforter—it works great! I also brought a small travel pillow.
- Towels
- Beach towel, bath towel, wash cloth, and hand towel
- Only a comforter or a heavier blanket. Everything else was provided. A sleeping bag is a great idea if you’re going to travel.
- None.

What are you glad you packed from home?

- Pictures of home. My favorite CD’s and tapes. A pair of black socks—they can be used for casual and also for nicer outfits! Medicines—if you don’t feel well, you do not want to be guessing what will work.
- Pictures
- Pair of comfortable pants for traveling and lounging around
- My stuffed animal, photo album w/ photos of my house and family, my laptop computer, my favorite CD’s.

What do you wish you had left at home?

- I really did not bring much with—we had strict size and weight restrictions.
- Hair dryer and curling iron
- Excess numbers of the same items that I brought (i.e. too many warm shirts, t-shirts, tank tops, socks, underwear, etc)
- Certain clothes, a hair dryer, make up, etc
- Shoes

Do you have any travel tips to pass on (planning advice, safety considerations, guidebooks, train vs. bus, etc.)?

- Lonely Planet and Let’s Go are great guidebooks! Buses save you money, but can really extend the time it takes to get places. Be realistic about money, it goes quickly when you’re on the road and you do not want to run out! “O2 Experience” is a good group that does cheap travel for students.
- Australia: from \$50 a day (a book). Buses are a faster public transport in Melbourne than trams.
- Do not purchase travel passes before you leave, wait and find out what your friends you make are doing so you can travel with them.
- STA travel at Uni was very helpful. Lonely Planet and Lets Go travel books are good; airfare in Australia is very cheap right now.
- The tram goes most everywhere. Public transport is cheap.

What places would you advise future students to see and why?

- Australia is a huge country! I would definitely recommend Kangaroo Island. It's off the southern coast and is truly amazing! You should also see the Great Ocean Road!
- Noosa, Uluru, Perth, Byron Bay, New Zealand
- Tasmania and the center of Australia (Adelaide—Alice Springs). Two very different places that are not filled with tourists.
- The Great Ocean Road, Uluru and Kata Tjuta (Ayers Rock and the Olgas), the Gold Coast, Byron Bay, Whitehaven Beach
- The Great Ocean Road is very scenic. Sydney

MONEY AND COMMUNICATIONS

How much money in U.S. currency would you recommend students have at their disposal for their whole time abroad?

- It depends how much traveling you do. I had about \$1800 and a credit card.
- \$2000 minimum
- Depends on how wisely they spend it. I avoided lots of drinking and eating out so it was around US \$2500
- Approx. \$3000
- \$5000

How much money did you have in foreign currency when you left for your program? Was it enough?

- \$70; yes, it was enough.
- None, I used a cash card to obtain all my money, it gave me the best exchange rate.
- I had about 5000 Australian dollars and it lasted almost the whole time
- \$2000, No

How did you manage your money (credit cards, traveler's checks, bank accounts etc.)? How and where did you access your money?

- I had traveler's checks and put it into a savings account with a cash station card. You can use this virtually anywhere. A credit card is very important for emergencies.
- Keep track of receipts—ATM's for check cards, debit cards, and credit cards.
- I only used credit cards for large transactions (over A\$200) and for phone orders. Otherwise I always used cash.
- I had a bank account and a check card from there. I accessed money from bank machines. It was easy and convenient.
- I used a credit card and paid it online through a checking account my parents could put money into. I brought \$1500 US Traveler's checks to set up a bank account locally.

How much money did you spend on books?

- \$150 American; many books have limited readings here, so you can read in the library.
- \$180 Australian
- I was really lucky and borrowed for one class and only purchased one A\$10 book. My other two classes the books were on reserve in the library.
- I got all my books from the library or borrowed them from friends on my floor.
- Over \$300

How did you communicate with the U.S.? What would you recommend to future students (e.g. calling card, set up e-mail account and where, etc.)?

- E-mail is the cheapest and easiest. Also, phone companies at home have some good deals for cheap calls.
- E-mail, AT&T, unidial phone card (prepaid)
- I used email (Hotmail) and bought phone cards with specific amounts of money on them here. Pocket mail seems like a very good idea.
- I bought Telstra phone cards and emailed almost every day.
- Calling cards are cheap, Email was provided by college where I stayed accessible 24 hours.

SCHOOL WORK

How did your academic experience abroad differ from your U.S. experiences concerning:

Relations with professors/Classroom Instruction?

- It is easy to get to know the teachers. They are all very nice and helpful, but usually you must make the initiative.
- Almost the same.
- Felt closer with professors back home. Classroom instruction was not as good.
- Classes met 1 time per week for 3 hours at a time.

Grading?

- Lower % and harder grading by professors.
- About the same as back home.
- 80-100% was an A, but an A was harder to get.
- 80% = A, 70% = B, etc.

Study habits?

- You must take studying upon yourself. For most classes there are only two assessments.
- Lots of reading. Tests are worth at least 50% of your grade.
- I studied less due to the fact that exams were only at the end and I had essays.
- Same
- There was one test at the end of the year, so I didn't have to study hard too often.

Library?

- Large, but resources are numbered. They put many things on Special Reserve so it can either be copied or checked out for 2 hours at a time. Only open until 10 p.m.
- I spent more time in it back home.
- Same
- It was close and well set up.

Computer Access?

- Could use more computers, but access is okay. You do need to pay for downloads and printing which is frustrating.
- You have to pay to use the dorms computer labs.
- Spent more time on it here (Australia) due to email communications
- Same
- Similar to UW-L

Other?

- Most assessment is in the form of academic papers.
- Every class had a discussion section.

What enabled/hindered your successful academic experience?

- I enjoyed having a computer where I lived. It allowed me to work on papers late at night and in quiet.
- Hindered: traveling during exam period.
- The teachers did not seem as qualified as they are back home so it was hard to take them seriously.

SOCIAL LIFE

How did you meet students from your host country?

- Clubs at school, classes, while traveling—Aussie's in general are super friendly.
- Bars, living arrangements, going on club trips.
- They were in the dorms with me. I did not meet them in my classes.
- I met most of them at the residence hall I stayed in.
- Living with students.

How did you like to spend your free time and why? Is there anything you regret not doing more of in your free time?

- Playing club sports, exploring Sydney, and traveling when I can.
- Looking around downtown Melbourne.
- Hanging out with my new friends by going to dinner, dessert, movies, or shopping and working out. I have no regrets.
- I toured close by tourist spots and went out with friends. I went to my friends' house on weekends and wish I'd done that more.
- We explored Melbourne. I wish I could have made it up to the East Coast.

What opportunities for social, recreational, and cultural events that the host university or program offered did you like the best? Why?

- BBQ's, bar night, clubs, international student night at the bar
- O-week was good to get to know lots of different people. Most of the activities were free or very cheap and fun.
- Our residence hall put on events that were fun and let me meet more people.
- Free BBQ's, they were free!!

What piece of advice would you give future students regarding their non-academic life while abroad?

- Meet as many people as possible.
- Enjoy it! Don't stick only in the big cities. Australia has so much to offer and see! The time goes sooo fast!
- Take advantage of it more than usual because you never know when you will ever get to see the wonderful people you have met again.
- Making friends is the best part of studying abroad.
- See as much as you can.

CULTURAL ISSUES

Are woman treated differently in your host country than in the U.S.? If so, what advice would you pass on to women who are thinking of studying in your host country?

- Not really, just watch the guys in the bar—they can be pushy!
- It is not a blow to the face, but I would say Australia is about 10 years behind the U.S. in women's issues. Most have conventional female jobs, but I felt that that will pass in time. I did not feel threatened at all.
- No.
- Gender roles are a bit more pronounced and distinguished. There is a stereotype that U.S. women are easy and some guys tried to treat me that way.

Are minorities—racial, religious, sexual identity—treated differently in your host country than in the U.S.? If so, what advice would you pass on to members of any minority group that are thinking of studying in your host country?

- Sydney is very sexually open and accepting! They have a huge Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Celebration—it was lots of fun! The Aboriginal people are still fighting for equality. There is a large Asian community here as well.
- Yes, homosexuals are more accepted.
- No, in fact they are much more diverse than we are, so they seem less discriminatory than the U.S.
- I didn't encounter any.
- No.

OTHER COMMENTS

- Studying in Australia is awesome! There are so many places and things to see! It goes fast, so enjoy it and take tons of pictures!

- Australia is the best! Travel if you can and save, save, save money before you go, but don't worry about money while you are there.
- It was the most wonderful, educational and fun experience I have ever had!